The Village Soothsayer.

Interlude.

Performed at Fontainebleau before Their Majesties
October 18 and 24, 1752.
And at Paris, by the Royal Academy of Music,
March 1, 1753.

To Mr. Du Clos,[1]
Historiographer of France, and one of the Forty of the French Academy, and the Academy of Inscriptions, and the Academy of Belles-Lettres.

Grant, Sir, that your name be at the head of this Work, which might never have appeared without you. This will be my first and only Dedication. May it do you as much honor as it does me.

I am with all my heart,
SIR,
Your very humble and very Obedient Servant,

J. J. Rousseau.

PREFACE.

Although I approved the changes that my friends judged it suitable to make to this Interlude when it was played at Court and, although its success was due in large part to them, I have not judged it suitable to adopt them today, and that is so for several reasons. The first is, that, since this Work carries my name, it is necessary that it be mine, even if it must be the worse for it: The second, that these changes might have been extremely good in themselves, and nevertheless remove from the Piece that unity so little known that would be the masterpiece of art, if one could preserve it without repetitions and without Monotony.[2] My third reason is, that having written this work only for my amusement, its true success is to please me: Now no one knows better than I do how it must be in order to please me the most.

CHARACTERS.

COLIN.
COLETTE.
THE SOOTHSAYER.
TROOP OF YOUNG PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE.

The Theater represents, on one side the Soothsayer's House; on the other Trees and Fountains, and at the rear a Hamlet.

SCENE I.

COLETTE *weeping, and wiping her eyes with her apron.*

I have lost all my happiness;
I have lost my Servitor;
Colin has forsaken me.

Alas! Is he capable of changing!
I want to think about it no more:
I think about it endlessly.

I have lost my Servitor;
I have lost all my happiness;
Colin has forsaken me.

He used to love me and that was my misfortune.
But then who is the one he prefers to me?
She is, then, very charming! Imprudent Shepherd,
Do you not fear the ills that I suffer today?
Colin is capable of changing toward me; you can have your turn.

What use to me to dream about it endlessly?
Nothing can cure my love,
And everything increases my sadness.

I have lost my Servitor;
I have lost all my happiness;
Colin has forsaken me.

I want to hate him. . . . I ought to . . .
Perhaps he loves me still. . . . Why does he flee me endlessly?
He used to seek me out so much.

The Soothsayer of the region has his residence here:
He knows everything. He will know my love's fate.
I see him, and I want to clear things up today.

SCENE II.

THE SOOTHSAYER, COLETTE.

While the Soothsayer comes forward gravely, Colette counts some change in her hand: then she folds it in a paper and gives it to the Soothsayer, after having hesitated a little over addressing him.

COLETTE, *with a timid air.*
Will I lose Colin forever?
Tell me if I must die.

THE SOOTHSAYER, *seriously.*
I read in your heart and I have read in his.

COLETTE.
Oh Gods!

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Control yourself.

COLETTE.
Well then?
Colin . . .

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Is unfaithful to you.

COLETTE.
I am dying.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
And yet he loves you still.

COLETTE, *in a lively manner.*
What are you saying?

THE SOOTHSAYER.
More skillful and less fair,
The Lady of these places . . .

COLETTE.

He is leaving me for her!

THE SOOTHSAYER.
I have already told you; he loves you still.

COLETTE, *sadly.*
And still he flees me.

THE SOOTHSAYER.

Count on my aid.
I claim I shall bring the fickle one back to your feet;
Colin wants to be brave; he loves to show off:
His vanity has given you an insult,
For which his love must atone.

COLETTE.

If of the gallants of the town
I had listened to the speeches,
Ah! How easy it would be for me
To form other ties of love!

Dressed as a rich Damsel,
I would shine every day;
With Ribbons and Lace
I would change my attire.

For the faithless one's love
I have rejected my happiness;
I would prefer to be less fair,
And keep my heart for him.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
I shall give his back to you, this will be my work.
You, apply your efforts to keeping it better.
To make yourself loved more,
Feign loving a little less.

Love grows when it is uneasy;
It falls asleep if it is content:
A slightly coquettish Shepherdess
Makes the Shepherd more constant.

COLETTE.
Colette gives herself up to your wise lessons.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Take another tone with Colin.

COLETTE.
I shall feign imitating the example he sets for me.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Do not imitate him in earnest;
But so that he can't be sure.
My art teaches me that he is coming;
I shall call you when it is time.

SCENE III.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
I knew it all from Colin and these poor children
Both admire the profound science
That makes me divine all that they taught me.
Their love seconds me fittingly today;
By making them happy, I must oppose
The airs and the scorn of the Lady of the place.

SCENE IV.
THE SOOTHSAYER, COLIN.

COLIN.
Love and your lessons have finally made me wise;
I prefer Colette to useless goods:
I can please her in village clothes;
What more will I obtain in clothes of gold?

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Colin, it is no longer time, and Colette has forgotten you.

COLIN.
She has forgotten me, oh Heaven! Is Colette capable of changing?

THE SOOTHSAYER.
She is a woman, young, and pretty;
Would she fail to be avenged?

COLIN.
No, Colette is not deceitful:
She promised me her faith;
Can she be in love
With any Shepherd but me?

THE SOOTHSAYER.
It is no Shepherd that she prefers to you,
It is a fine Gentleman of the Town.

COLIN.
Who told you so?

THE SOOTHSAYER, *emphatically.*
My art.

COLIN.
I couldn't have suspected it.
Alas! How it will cost me
For having been too easygoing!
For letting myself be taken in by Ladies of the Court!
Could I then have lost Colette forever?

THE SOOTHSAYER.
One cannot serve fortune and Love at the same time.
Sometimes it costs to be such a fine lad.

COLIN.
Have mercy, teach me the way to avoid
The horrible blow that I dread.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
Leave me alone for a moment to consult.
The Soothsayer takes out of his pocket a magic book and a little magic wand, with which he casts a spell. Some young Peasants, who were coming to consult him, let their gifts fall, and run away terrified at seeing his contortions.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
The spell is cast. Colette is going to make her way to this spot;
You must await her here.

COLIN.
Will I be able to succeed in appeasing her?
Alas! Will she be willing to listen to me?

SOOTHSAYER.
With a faithful and tender heart,
One has the right to obtain everything.

Aside.

Let's go inform her in advance of what she must say.

SCENE V.

COLIN.
I am going to see my charming Mistress again
Farewell, castles, splendor, riches,
Your brilliance tempts me no longer.
If my tears, my attentive efforts
Can touch what I adore,
I shall see you reborn again,
Sweet moments I have lost.

When one knows how to love and please,
Does one need any other good?
Give me back your heart, my Shepherdess,
Colin has given his back to you.

My pipe, my crook,
Be my only splendor
My Colette is my adornment,
Her favors are my treasure.

How Lords of consequence
Would like to have her troth!
In spite of all their power
They are less happy than I.

SCENE VI.
COLIN, COLETTE, *dressed up.*

COLIN, *aside.*
I see her. . . . I tremble at offering myself to her sight. . . .
. . . Save us. . . . I lose her if I flee. . . .

COLETTE, *aside.*
He sees me. . . . How nervous I am!
My heart is beating. . . .

COLIN.
. . . I do not know where I am.

COLETTE.
I have drawn too close, without thinking about it.

COLIN.
I cannot withdraw, I must approach her.
To Colette, with a mollifying tone, and a half-laughing, half-embarrassed manner.
My Colette . . . are you angry?
I am Colin: deign to look at me.

COLETTE.
Colin loved me, Colin was faithful to me:
I look at you, and no longer see Colin.

COLIN.
My heart has not changed at all: my too cruel error
Came from a fate cast by some malicious spirit;
The Soothsayer has destroyed it. I am in spite of desire
Still Colin, still in love.

COLETTE.
By a fate, in my turn, I feel myself pursued,
The Soothsayer can do nothing about it.

COLIN.
How unhappy I am!

COLETTE.
By a more constant Lover . . .

COLIN.
Ah! followed by my death,
Your faithlessness . . .

COLETTE.
Your efforts are useless
No, Colin, I love you no more.

COLIN.
Your faith has not been torn from me;
No, consult your heart better:
You yourself, by taking my life from me
Would lose all your happiness.

COLETTE, *aside.*
Alas!
To Colin.
No, you have betrayed me.
Your efforts are useless:
No, Colin, I love you no more.

COLIN.
It's done then! You want me to die,
And I shall withdraw from the hamlet forever.

COLETTE, *calling back Colin who is withdrawing slowly.*
Colin?

COLIN.
What?

COLETTE.
You are fleeing me?

COLIN.
Must I remain
To see a new lover with you?

COLETTE.

As long as I could please Colin,
My fate fulfilled my desires.

COLIN.

When I pleased my Shepherdess,
I lived with pleasures.

COLETTE.

Since his heart disdained me,
Another has won mine.

COLIN.

After the gentle ties she breaks,
Would there be any other good?
In a piercing tone.
My Colette is withdrawing!

COLETTE.

I am afraid of a fickle lover.

TOGETHER.

I withdraw in my turn.
Having become peaceful, my heart
Will forget if it can,
One day that you were dear to it.

COLIN.

Whatever happiness they promise me,
In the bonds that are offered me,
I would still prefer Colette
To all the goods in the Universe.

COLETTE.

Although a young, lovable Lord,
Speaks to me today of love
To me Colin would seem preferable
To all the brilliance of Court.

COLIN, *tenderly.*

Ah! Colette!

COLETTE, *with a sigh.*

Ah! Fickle Shepherd!
Must I love you in spite of myself?

Colin throws himself at Colette's feet; she draws his attention to an extremely costly ribbon in his hat which he had received from the Lady: Colin throws it away disdainfully. Colette gives him a simpler one, with which she had been adorned, and which he receives with rapture.

TOGETHER.

I promise you
Forever, Colin
Promises you
My my faith
heart and
His his faith
May a sweet marriage
Unite me with you.
Let's love always without dividing:
May love be our law.

Forever, . . . etc.

SCENE VII.
THE SOOTHSAYER, COLIN, COLETTE.

THE SOOTHSAYER.
I have freed you from a cruel evil spell;
You still love each other in spite of the envious.

COLIN.
What gift could ever pay for such a service?

They each offer a gift to the Soothsayer.

THE SOOTHSAYER, *taking the two hands.*
I am paid enough if you are happy.

Come, young boys; come, lovable girls:
Gather together, come, imitate them.
Come, gallant Shepherds; come, gentle Beauties,
While singing their happiness, learn to savor it.

SCENE VIII, FINALE.
THE SOOTHSAYER, COLIN, COLETTE,
BOYS AND GIRLS OF THE VILLAGE.

CHORUS.

Colin returns to his Shepherdess;
Let's celebrate such a fine return.
May their sincere friendship
Have an ever-renewed charm.

Let's sing the dazzling power
Of the Soothsayer of our Village
He brings back a fickle lover
And makes him happy and constant.

COLIN.

ROMANCE.

In my gloomy hut,
Always new cares;
Wind, sun, or cold,
Always pain and labor.
Colette, my Shepherdess,
If you come to live there,
In his cottage, Colin
Has nothing to regret.

From fields, from meadows
Returning each night,
Each night more dear
I shall come to see you again
Preceding the return
Of the sun in our plains,
I shall charm away my pains
Singing of our love.

PANTOMIME.

THE SOOTHSAYER.

All must vie with
What we here display;
If I cannot leap this way,
For my part I shall say a new song.

He takes a song from his pocket.

VAUDEVILLE.

I.

Art is favorable to Love,
And Love can charm artlessly;
In the town one is more lovable,
In the village one knows better how to love.
Ah! Ordinarily
Love hardly knows
What it allows, what it forbids;
It is a child, it is a child.

COLIN, *repeats the refrain.*

Ah! Ordinarily
Love hardly knows
What it allows, what it forbids;
It is a child, it is a child.

Looking at the song.

It has more couplets! I find it rather fine.

COLETTE, *eagerly.*

Let's see, let's see, we shall sing too.

She takes the song.

II.

Love follows the innocence
Of simple Nature here;
In other places, from adornment
It looks for a borrowed shine
Ah! Ordinarily
Love hardly knows
What it allows, what it forbids;
It is a child, it is a child.

CHORUS.

It is a child, it is a child.

III.

COLIN.

Often a cherished ardor
Is that of an artless heart;

Often from coquetry
A fickle heart is kept.
Ah! Ordinarily, . . . etc.
At the end of each couplet, the Chorus repeats this verse.
It is a child, it is a child.

IV.

THE SOOTHSAYER.

Love, according to its whim,
Orders and disposes of us:
This God permits jealousy,
And this God punishes the jealous.
Ah! Ordinarily, . . . etc.

V.

COLIN.

By flitting from beauty to beauty,
One often loses the happy moment
Often a too faithful Shepherd
Is less loved than an inconstant one.
Ah! Ordinarily, . . . etc.

VI.

COLETTE.

One is exposed to his caprice,
He wants laughter, he wants tears;
By the . . . by the . . .
She has trouble reading.

COLIN, *helps her to make it out.*

By the rigors one repels it;

COLETTE.

One weakens it with favors.

TOGETHER.

Ah! Ordinarily
Love hardly knows
What it allows, what it forbids;
It is a child, it is a child.

CHORUS.
It is a child, it is a child.

They dance.

COLETTE.

With the object of my loves,
Nothing afflicts me, all enchants;
Ceaselessly he laughs, I forever sing:
It is a chain of happy days.

When one knows well how to love, how charming life is!
As, in the midst of flowers that shine on its course,
A gentle stream runs and winds its way.
When one knows well how to love, how charming life is!

They dance.

COLETTE.

ROUND.
Let's go dance under the elms:
Step lively, young lassies.
Let's go dance under the elms:
Gallants, take up your pipes.

The Villagers repeat these four verses.

COLETTE.

Let's repeat a thousand songs:
And to have a joyful heart
Let's dance with our lovers,
But let's never remain lonely!

Let's go dance under the elms, . . .etc.

THE VILLAGERS.
Let's go dance under the elms, . . . etc.

COLETTE.
In the Town they make much more fuss,
But are they as gay in their frolics?
Always content,
Always singing,
Artless pleasures,

Unpainted beauty;
Are all their concerts worth our bagpipes?

Let's go dance under the elms, . . . etc.

THE VILLAGERS.

Let's go dance under the elms, . . . etc.